

Smoke Certificate Information - A guide for sellers and realtors

City of Newport Fire Department

November 2020

Smoke Certification: The Who, Why, What, When, Where, and How

- The following presentation is designed to provide information on smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector requirements with regards to one, two, and three family dwellings.
- By understanding these requirements, both sellers and realtors, will have a better working knowledge of what is required in order to obtain the "Smoke Certificate" required by most closing attorneys.

The Who:

- Per the RI Life Safety Code (RILSC), the seller is responsible for the proper placement and operation of smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detectors at the time of sale.
- It is not uncommon for the realtor to take care of this for the seller.

The Who:

- BATTERY (only) devices do not require an electrician for installation.
- Whomever is going to install, test, or maintain a battery only device should be familiar with placement and installation requirements of the RILSC.

The Who:

- HARDWIRED devices (with or without battery backup) can only be installed by a licensed electrician, or the homeowner, and only once an electrical permit is obtained from the Building Official.

The Who:

The placement and type of protection devices installed in 1, 2, and 3 family dwellings are determined by the 2019 RI Life Safety Code (with RI amendments).

The Who:

The most recent RILSC is comprised of the following:

1. NFPA 101- Life Safety Code, (2015 Edition) with the 2019 ammendments. Chapters 24/25
2. NFPA 72- Fire Alarm Code, (2013 Edition) Chapter 29
3. NFPA 720- Standard for the Installation of Carbon Monoxide Dectection Warning Equipment (2015 Edition)

The Who:

- Only the RI Fire Board of Appeal and Review can grant relief or exceptions to the RILSC.
(This relief is granted in the form of a variance.)
- The local Assistant Deputy State Fire Marshal does not have the authority to provide relief for devices that are improperly located.

The Why:

Simply Put-

- SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!

The Why

Nationally-

The risk of dying in home fires is 54% lower in homes with working smoke alarms than in homes with no alarms or non-functioning alarms.

The Why

Nationally-

Dead batteries caused one-quarter (25%) of the smoke alarm failures.

The Why

Locally-

The past two fatal fires in Newport took place in single family homes that did not have functioning smoke alarms.

The Why

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms are considered to be one of the most effective, and least expensive, means of providing early warning to a potentially deadly fire and could reduce the risk of dying from a fire in your home by almost half.

The What- Smoke Alarms

Home Depot:
\$24.88 (2 Pack)
Battery Only
10 Year Battery
<= 1976



The What- Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Home Depot:
\$39.97 (Single)
Battery Only
10 Year Battery
<= Dec. 31, 2001



The What- Smoke Alarm

Home Depot:
\$49.97 (2 Pack)
Hardwired &
Battery Backup
10 Year Battery



The What- Carbon Monoxide Detector

Home Depot:
\$32.97 (Single)
Hardwired &
Battery Backup
9 Volt Battery



The What- Combination Smoke Alarm & Carbon Monoxide Detector

Home Depot:
\$34.88 (Single)
Battery Only
"Combo"
10 Year Battery



The What- Combination Smoke Alarm & Carbon Monoxide Detector

Home Depot:
\$59.97 (Single)
Hardwired &
Battery Backup
"Combo"
10 Year Battery



The What- First Alert Hub & Wireless Smoke Alarm & Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Home Depot:
\$59.97 (Single)
Hardwired &
Battery Backup
"Combo"
10 Year Battery



The What- Household Fire Alarm System

Typically have a
Monthly charge.
Typically are
hardwired with
Battery Backup.
Often they are a
“Monitored System”



The What-

Smoke Certificates

- Smoke Certificates are good for 120 days.
- They are only issued for 1, 2, & 3 family homes.

The What-

Smoke Certificates

- Smoke Certificates are not meant for condominium in Apartment Occupancies (4 + units; unless the building is a townhouse.)
- A copy of the commercial Fire Alarm Uniform Test Report (UTR) will typically suffice for the closing.
- We will test the smoke & CO alarms in apartment occupancies if requested.

The What-

Smoke Certificates

- In the event you want a letter from the FD for a condominium sale in an Apartment Occupancy, we can assist by writing one stating the compliance status of the building's commercial fire alarm system.
- The status of the system will be indicated. (i.e. Not Installed, Out of Date for Testing, or Current and Compliant).

The When:

Plan
Ahead!

- The best thing you can do to ensure a smooth sale is PLAN AHEAD!

The When:

Plan Ahead!

- Schedule your Smoke Cert inspection as early as possible!
- Preferably, as soon as you get the listing.

The When:

Plan
Ahead!

- Captain Currey is your connection in Newport.
- 401-845-5919 or
- scurrey@cityofnewport.com

The When:

Plan
Ahead!

- Smoke Certificate inspections are typically done on Wednesdays.
- Please do not wait until the week of the closing to try and schedule your inspection!
- We are currently scheduling between 70 and 95 inspections per month.

The Where: (Depends on year of construction)

See the RI Secretary of State's Website for device location based on year of construction:

https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/FSCBAR/REG_10824_20190607160207.pdf

The Where: (Where are devices required?)

Location,
Location,
Location!!!

- If an electrical permit was required by the building department for the installation of smoke alarms or CO detectors during any new construction, the date of that permit may have an impact on what devices are required within the scope of the "new" work only.

The Where: (common problems)

Proximity to kitchen stove

- Smoke alarms shall not be placed within 10' of the horizontal flow path from a stationary or fixed cooking appliance.
- (72:29.8.3.4 (5))

The Where: (common problems)

Proximity to kitchen stove

- Smoke alarms installed between 10' and 20' of the stove must be:
 - 1- Have a hush button or,
 - 2- Be photoelectric
- (72:29.8.3.4 (5))

The Where: (common problems)

Proximity to
bathrooms
with a tub or
shower-

- Smoke alarms shall not be installed within a 36 inch. horizontal path from a door to a bathroom -(unless specifically listed for that use).
- (72:29.8.3.4 (6))

The Where: (common problems)

Air supply registers

(Heat or A/C)

- Smoke alarms shall not be installed within a 36 inch horizontal path of air supply registers.
- (72:29.8.3.4 (7))

The Where: (common problems)

Ceiling fans-

- Smoke alarms must not be located within 36 inches of the tips of ceiling fan blades.
- (72:29.8.3.4 (9))

The Where: (or where not to put devices)

Coffered ceilings

- Smoke alarms must not be located more than 12" down from the highest portion of ceiling (Smoke rises).
- (72:29.8.3.4 (11))

The Where: (or where not to put devices)

Sloped ceilings-

- Smoke alarms should not be located lower than 36 inches on the high side of the ceiling, and not closer than 4 inches from the adjoining wall surface.
- (72:29.8.3.2)

The Where:

CO detectors
are required-

- Outside of each separate dwelling unit sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.
720:9.4.1.1 (1)
- On every occupiable level of a dwelling unit, including basements, excluding attics and crawl spaces.
720:9.4.1.1 (2)

The Where:

- NOTE:
- Carbon monoxide detectors are not required when the building does not contain any fuel burning appliances (water heater / heating system / clothes dryer / stove / oven) or fireplaces.

The How: Step 1

- Plan Ahead !

Schedule your inspection early –
The certificate is good for 120 days.

The How: Step 2

- Check for any open Smoke and CO related permits
- As soon as you get the listing, contact the Building Inspector's office and ensure that there are no open Smoke and CO electrical permits.
- Open permits may be an indication that work was never inspected.

The How: Step 2 (continued)

- Your closing will not be held up because of any open building, roofing, window, siding, plumbing, or demo permits.
- Any open permits of this nature will be noted on the Smoke Certificate.

The How: Step 2 (continued)

- Open permits that can delay a closing are usually associated with work that was previously permitted by the Building Official but, was never inspected by the Electrical Inspector, Mechanical Inspector, and/or the Fire Department.

The How: Step 3

- Call the Fire Department and schedule your inspection as soon as possible.
- Please ask for questions prior to scheduling the inspection if you need additional clarification or have an unusual property situation.

The How: Step 4

- Visit the property *before* the day of the scheduled inspection.
- Use a checklist to verify that the proper devices are installed where they should be, that they function properly, and that they are not outdated.

(See end of presentation for requirements based on the year of construction)

The How: Step 4 (continued)

- Check the devices:
 - If interconnection is required - ensure all devices are interconnected.
 - Are the batteries installed?
 - Are any devices chirping? (weak battery)
 - Are they outdated? (Smokes are typically listed to last 10 years & CO detectors - 7 years)
 - Do the devices sound appropriately- 3 pulse temporal for smokes and 4 pulse temporal for CO?

The How: Step 5

- Meet the inspector at the scheduled date and time:
 - The inspector will need access to all rooms
 - Witness the inspection if possible
 - Pay inspection fee (Check or money order only)
 - Verify Smoke Certificate (PDF) arrives via email

The How: Step 5 (Continued)

- For homes protected by Household Fire Alarm Systems-
- Please schedule the inspection when the fire alarm company's technician can be present to conduct the test.
- Some systems require heat, smoke, and passwords to test
- If the company cannot commit to an exact time, testing can be scheduled for a window of time on Mon. or Tues.

Final Note:

- The Fire Department inspection should be viewed as nothing more than a basic formality.
- It is highly recommended that you check all installed devices for proper operation and location before the final inspection!

Final Note:

The best way to ensure a successful smoke certificate inspection is to ensure that *you* visit the property *prior to* the final inspection and *verify* that the *correct devices* are located in the *proper locations* and that *they work* as they are supposed to.

Requirements for 1 & 2 family homes

Requirements for device type and location may be found on the RI Secretary of State website (pages 52 - 59)

https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/FSCBAR/REG_10824_20190607160207.pdf

Requirements for 3 Family Apartment Buildings

Requirements for device type and location may be found on the RI Secretary of State website (pages 59 - 63)

https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/FSCBAR/REG_10824_20190607160207.pdf